

BMHA Newsletter

BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA



Volume 7, Number 3

Jul/Aug/Sep 1996

NOTEPAD

BMHA Now on Internet

Through the efforts of BMHA'er Chris Charron, WBORSW, RAGBRAI has given us a "free ride" on their Internet page. To see the BMHA Home Page, go to: <http://www.ragbrai.org/bmha.html>. Plans are in the making for BMHA to have its very own page soon. Ron Consol, KB0VXA, has offered to help set up it up. Watch next issue for more info.

Flash! Member Gives up Cycling

Mary Duffield, WA6KFA, our oldest member, writes:At age 80 I have to give up my favorite hobby, cycling. Had an injury, not bike-related, and Doctor said I healed like an 18-year-old, due to all my yrs. of cycling. Reluctantly, I'm putting all my bike gear up for sale: two five-speed recumbents (one equipped as a ham radio station, with 2-meter antenna doubling as safety flag); helmets, baskets, etc., including a one-of-a-kind trailer hitch for trailering bikes anywhere. All this new cost over \$1800. Must sell, make me an offer. Phone: 408-462-9605, or write: M. Duffield, 2355 Brommer #23, Santa Cruz CA 95062.

BMHA Non-Hams, Attention!

Recently you received from Skip LaFetra, AA6WK, a special letter addressed to our 38 non-ham members. In addition, you will have received from ARRL a "Prospective Ham" package, which includes information about ham clubs, classes and license exams in your area. This courtesy was arranged by Peter Budnik, KB1HY, of the ARRL headquarters staff.

1996-97 Directories Coming Soon

Late in July we'll be sending you the 1996-97 BMHA Membership Directory along with the directories for members on E-mail and/or packet radio. If you need to change or add to your listing(s) you must notify us immediately at BMHA, POB 4009, Boulder CO 80306. Send E-mail information directly to John Einberger, NOMSA, whose address is: nomsa@aol.com

BMHA'er Big in Packet World

The BMHA Newsletter regularly covers our members' accomplishments in combining amateur radio and cycling. But some of our members have made substantial contributions to hamming that don't involve cycling. One such member is Stan Hunting, KFOIA. While a few of our HF-active, bicycle-mobile members may recognize Stan's call from on-the-air contacts, digital-mode amateurs the world over will recognize Stan as the author of KaWin, the hottest new software for packet and the HF digital modes. Stan hasn't yet loaded laptop and TNC on his bike for mobile-in-motion hamming, but a few years back he did claim the US elevation record for land-based packet radio when he operated portable from the top of Colorado's highest peak,

Mt. Elbert, at 14,433', after backpacking the gear to the top from base camp at 10,000'.

Stan reports that KaWin can be easily downloaded from the KaWin Home Page on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.mutadv.com/kawin>. Recently, Kantronics recognized Stan's efforts by including a copy of KaWin with every KAM TNC and upgrade. Nice going, Stan!

BMHA Makes Contact with Tour Directors

We've made contact with 37 directors of the big cycling events, sending them information about ham radio and how it, and BMHA, can help them run their events. We've received several positive responses from these leaders, all members of the National Bicycle Tour Directors Assoc. Using input from various sources, Dave Gerbig, WB9MZL, is writing two handbooks: one showing ham operators how to handle communication on a bicycling event. The second, tells tour directors how to obtain and utilize ham radio on their events. These handbooks will soon be finished and distributed.

---Hartley Alley, NAOA, Editor

HamVention '96 Report

The seventh annual BMHA Forum at the 1996 Dayton HamVention was, as usual, a very successful meeting, with over 60 ham/bicyclists attending. We passed out 50 packets of BMHA information, netting five new members. Ned Mountain, WC4X, served as moderator and introduced the forum panelists.

Jim Kortge, NU8N, demonstrated his bicycle-mounted HF radio and showed slides of his bicycle/hamming trip on Michigan's Upper Peninsula---a wonderful place to cycle.

Russ Dwarshuis, KB8U, brought his radio-equipped recumbent bicycle and demonstrated computer modeling of HF and VHF antennas mounted on bicycles, including an amusing computer-rendering of a 30-foot bike ant. Ned Mountain was unable to bring his bicycle with its unique "WC4X Bike Mike", but he ran a very informative video to show us how it was used, and an audio recording of some of the radio contacts he has made while cycling.

Chris Charron, WBORSW, led a discussion of safe cycling and told us about coordinating ham radio assistance on RAGBRAI, the famous ride across Iowa. He discussed safety problems encountered on group tours and solutions made possible by ham radio assistance.

The Saturday afternoon BMHA annual bicycle ride starting in Tipp City was again organized by Ken Noffsinger, AE8I, and Jim Gumbert, NC8Y. This year's perfect weather set the scene for a good ride for the BMHA members and the local club riders who joined the group.

---Jean Alley, NOEOX

TRAVEL & ADVENTURE

Why I Became a Ham

There I was, out on the lonely eastern plains of Colorado, trying to pedal my way to Massachusetts. Riding along all by myself, when a sudden sidewind gust knocked me down. I wound up on the pavement, somewhat bloodied.

On hearing about this on his radio, a friendly brother ham drove out to meet me, bandaged me up, fed me, and led me to the local motel.

Ham to motel man: "You should give this guy a special rate."

Motel man: "Why the hell should I do that?"

Ham: "This old guy is riding his bicycle from Colorado to Massachusetts to go to his high school's 50th reunion!"

Motel man: "Wow! Really? Tell you what, I'll let him have a \$35 room for ten bucks. Glad to have you in my motel, fella!"

But I'm getting ahead of my story. Way back in 1980 I decided I'd do a solo bike ride back to my high school's 50th, which would take place in '87. (As a kid bike rider I had dreams of someday taking a really long bike ride.) Physically, I was more than ready. I had been a "serious" club cyclist for 15 years, had bike-toured yearly in the US or Europe, had even ridden to the top of a 14,000-foot Colorado mountain peak. I was certainly ready to pedal the 2,000 miles from Boulder, Colorado to Lynn, Mass.

But one thing had me worried: I'd be all by myself, no sag, no nothing. And what if something happened to me out on those lonely stretches of Colorado, Nebraska and Iowa? Besides it would be nice to have some way to talk to people along the way and get info about motels, restaurants, routes through cities. And it would nice just to chat with people. Maybe some kind of radio would do the trick.

On a club ride I fell in with a fellow bikie who was said to be a radio ham (what ever that was), told him about my planned long ride and asked him if I should get a CB. He put on his brakes and pulled to the side of the road and yelled "You don't want CB, you don't want CB, you don't want CB!" I said, "John, what do I want?" He said, "You want a ham radio!"

With that, he reached in his handlebar bag and pulled out a neat little device which he called an "HT". He proceeded to talk to a guy in Cheyenne. A hundred miles away! When I heard the FM-quality audio, I was sure I needed one of those little radios. Then John said something about a phone patch, punched some touch-tone buttons, and started talking to his room mate back in Boulder, who was on a phone! That clinched it. I said, "I gotta have one for my trip. How much do they cost?"

"Never you mind how much they cost. You have to pass a test and get a ham license before you can talk on one of these radios," said John, bringing me down with a jolt. I got the books, went to ham classes, really got enthused. Not only did I easily pass the novice and tech exams, allowing me to talk (at last!) on an HT, but my "ham exam fever" took me through one upgrade after another. In a year's time I had the Extra license and the neat call of NAOA. It was fun, but hardly a breeze: my log says that I spent over 60 hours studying code alone, just to pass the 20 words-per-minute requirement on the Extra test.

So I was ready for the long ride. Had the legs, had the radio, and had six years of experience on the ham bands. But

there were two main details that needed attention before the big ride. I wanted to find a safe, sane route, and I wanted to make sure that I'd have plenty of hams to talk with along the way.

A year ahead of time, my wife Jean, N0EOX, and I scouted the 2,000-mile route in our RV. We were mainly looking for these things: US highways with wide, paved shoulders; state highways that had hardly any traffic; and motels a suitable distance apart. (I decided against camping out. Early April would be too cold---turned out it snowed the first day!) So the route was set.

The next problem: how to assure me a good supply of hams on 2 meters from Colo. to Mass. The solution: I wrote a short article about my trip, listing the roads I'd be on, etc., along with a color picture of me in full bicycle-mobile regalia, wearing a safety vest with large letters NAOA front and rear. I sent this off to the four main ham magazines, in time for my story to be in their April issue, just in time for my start on April 1st, 1987. They all ran the piece, with photo, especially *QST*, which ran it prominently, in color, in the "Up Front in *QST*" section. On the trip I would often be overtaken by motoring hams who had spied my NAOA safety vest. They'd say, "I saw your picture in *QST*! Any way I can help you? Where you gonna have lunch?" I didn't get much chance to be lonely.

NAOA

Hartley Alley
Box 4009
Boulder, Colo 80306
Boulder County

2150 miles by bicycle from
Boulder, Colorado to
Lynn, Massachusetts.

In the spring of 1987, Pedalling
back to my home town for my
50th High School Reunion.

Operating 'bicycle mobile' on
2-meters while underway.

See *QST* for trip details
Apr 1987, page 12
Nov 1987, page 12



The *QST* coverage made it possible for me, while pedalling along, to operate this way: "This is NAOA bicycle-mobile. I'm cycling from Colorado to Massachusetts for my high school's 50th reunion. If you'd like more info please see page 12 of your April *QST*." There'd be a pause, during which I assume they glanced at their *QST*, and then I'd hear, "NAOA, this is XX0XX in Smalltown, Nebraska. Where're you at? I'd like to come see you and your rig."

If nobody on the repeater answered my call, I'd say, "This is NAOA bicycle-mobile again. I'm looking for information about motels and restaurants in Smalltown." This would dispel any notion that I was trying to cadge a free meal or a bed for the night, or permission to pitch a tent on their front lawn. Thus assured that I wasn't a bum, they'd come on frequency and I'd get good local info, and we'd chat---some times until we ran out of repeater, which is a long time when you're pedalling along at 12 mph.

I always kept a list of the people on a given repeater who had contacted me. Then the next morning as I rode out of

(continued on next page)

town, I'd get on the repeater and read off my list of "helping hams", thanking them, whether they came on or not. As a parting shot, I'd ask for info about the next repeater on my route, and the name and call of a ham who would likely be monitoring. In this way I had sort of a continuous ham connection for days in a row.

In a future issue I'll tell you more about the highs, and lows, of my long solo ride.

---Hartley Alley, NAOA, Editor
POB 4009
Boulder, Colorado, 80306

ANTENNAS

Bike Antenna Tops Out at 13 Feet 6.

—The Legal Limit!

Greetings from the heartlands of America. I just finished riding the flatlander's annual hill climb, the Hilly Hundred. While riding I had time to think of the bike mobile antenna problem. However, in truth, the antenna is not the problem, the real problem is the mounting. I once saw a van driving to the Dayton Hamvention where the owner had mounted a Rohn 25 top section, complete with rotor, mast, and stacked elevens. During the mobile 146.52-megahertz yak party that cruises I-70 from Indianapolis to Dayton, this guy produced a signal that had to be heard to be believed.



Here's Dave, WB9MZL, showing us his sky-scraping bike antenna. So that the antenna would fit in the picture, he lowered it so that it's only ten and a half feet tall!

The problem then might be to duplicate that setup on the bike. But, we can't just duplicate the Rohn 25 setup on the bike, too heavy. Been there, done that, makes the bike handle funny, not a good plan. (Anybody need a slightly bent 11-element antenna?) However, good mobile antennas are available, reliable, sturdy, and affordable.

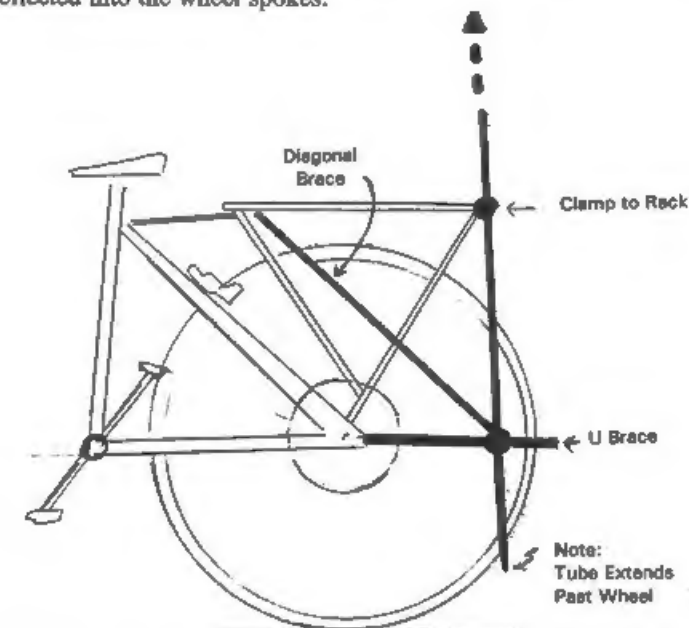
I read a study somewhere that on a typical mobile setup, height is important. The results I remember were that 3 feet of increased height equaled 3-6 db gain. Our bikes are lower than even the typical sports car roof. To regain that height and the associated gain we must raise the antenna. Which is what I did.

Materials needed:

- 1- Bike, equipped with rear rack.
 - 1- U-brace, made for Blackburn front panniers rack, or locally produced equivalent.
 - 1- Two-to-five foot length of aluminum tube about 5/8" o.d. (I used one from a dead Tri-band antenna. A sad case of suicide from 75 feet, through the neighbor's roof.) This piece had one end necked down to 7/16" i.d.
 - 1- Three-to-five foot length of aluminum tube, 7/16" o.d.
 - 1- Piece of aluminum rod to fit inside the 7/16" tube. 2" is plenty.
 - 1- Trunk-lip mounting for a NMO antenna base, and the antenna base.
 - 1- Mobile antenna. (I used a ANLI AT-2, a dual-band, which ran about 50 bucks when new.)
- Several hose clamps, miscellaneous small hardware—mine came from the dead Tri-band.
- Small diameter (1/8") coax and connector to suit your radio.

Procedure:

Mount the U-brace to the bike's rear dropouts so it extends to the rear, out around the tire. Clamp the large tube to the rear rack and the U-brace using hose clamps. When properly mounted, the vertical loads are carried by the rack, the brace provides a bit of horizontal stability. The bottom of the tube should extend below the point where the end could be deflected into the wheel spokes.



Add a diagonal brace running from the rack front end to the U-brace/tube junction. The material and size of this diagonal brace material are left to you. Drive the small rod into the small tubing. Drill through the tubing and rod to mount the NMO mounting bracket. Attach coax. (Purists will then route the coax through the tubes.)

Tie a 13'6" length of cord to the antenna tip. Attach antenna to base, insert small tube into large tube, and with bike upright adjust the antenna height until you either run out of tube (be certain there are at least 4" of overlap for clamping) or the

(Continued on next page)

end of the cord comes off the ground. (13'6" is legal maximum height for most state roads.) Route the coax to the radio and attach connector. I used strapping tape to secure the coax. If you don't like the highly visible tape, buy a bike that matches.

Comments

Lower the antenna, when riding back roads that are shaded by low-hanging trees whose limbs haven't been trimmed back by large truck traffic. If you fear trees, add a guy (100-pound-test fishing line) from the seatpost to the antenna base, just below the built-in spring. (At my body mass---ten stone---a tree strike either goes unnoticed or surprises the living h*ll out of the skinny butts trying to draft me.)

With proper selection of materials this is a light weight, high-riding, and high-gain dual-band antenna system. On the Hilly Hundred, I had full quieting signals, while Ron Cooper, WB9DKL, riding alongside with a J-pole did not even break squelch. I never check SWR---since it works, I don't ask. I also used 75-ohm coax, because it was there. I transferred the ANLI antenna from its mounting on my pickup truck to the bike at the ride start. Therefore, the cost was near zero, unless you count the Tri-bander and the repairs to my neighbor's roof.

—Dave Gerbig, WB9MZZL
3504 Tremont Way
Bloomington, IN 47401

NEW MEMBERS

We're pleased to add these names to our Membership List:

Mimi Bell, N1VGT, RR 1, Box 3278, Norway ME 04268
Steve Bell, N1XAV, " " "
Richard Brewer, 1727 Valley View Av, Belmont CA 94002
Paul Carter, KF4JIR, 2203 Naylor Rd, Huntsville AL 35801
Patricia Consol, 8149 Olde Stage Rd, Boulder CO 80302
Ron Consol, KBOVXA, " " "
Marilyn Corbin, N8XKE, 6483 Brush Hollow, New Carlisle OH 45344
William J Deegan, AD3S, 12432 Littleton St, Wheaton MD 20906
Norman Dill, N8STS, 39 S. Hobbs Hwy, Traverse City MI 49688
Linda Eaton, KF8CUT, 1075 Syracuse Dr, Sunnyvale CA 94087
Steven Eaton, KQ6EI, " " "
Allan J Horning, WB4YCN, 5518 Chase Ct, W. Palm Beach FL 33415
Dwight Jones, K06FE, 25872 Huron, Loma Linda CA 92354
Tom Link, N3JNN, 5889 Darlington Rd, Pittsburgh PA 15217
Maynard Lowry, KD6SLM, 11700 Valiant St, Riverside CA 92505
Barry B Lumpkin, KE4FHG, 3242 Park Ave, Memphis TN 38111
Robert McGeorge, KB8SAQ, 7294 Memory Lane, Cincinnati OH 45239
Tom McManamon, 3801 West 152 St, Cleveland OH 44111
Phil Milezzo, KC6OEL, 2121 Windy Hill, Marietta GA 30060
Eric Offerdahl, KB9NAL, 110 Lincoln St, Verona WI 53593
John Offerdahl, KC9XH, " " "
Rita Offerdahl, N9EZK, " " "
Marcie M Stilwell, KC7DAT, 1421 NE Rigg Ct, Poulsbo WA 98370
Tom Sullivan, NOTGJ, 3141 Dean Ct #107, Mnpls MN 55416
Bob Vincert, N8RER, POB 5401, Dearborn MI 48128
Mike Wimble, KM6WP, 1144 Snowberry Ct, Sunnyvale CA 94087
Everett G Winsberg, N7BHI, POB 1483, Coupeville WA 98239

With traditional ham friendliness, make contact with these new members, welcome them to BMHA, and help them with any problems they might have.

BMHA NEWSLETTER

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We welcome articles, suggestions, letters, announcements, photos, artwork --- anything pertaining to bicycling while operating an amateur radio, or vice versa.

Submitted material will be edited for clarity and, if necessary, shortened to fit space constraints. Material should be submitted before Mar 1, June 1, Sept 1, or Dec 1 for inclusion in the ensuing issue.

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ABOUT BMHA

For the information of our first-time readers

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America got its start when a 'Stray' in the June '89 QST magazine asked to "get in touch with hams who operate their radios while bicycle-mobile", signed by Hartley Alley, NA0A. Twenty five hams responded, filled out questionnaires, and received a summary of the collected data.

In April of '90 we had our first BMHA Forum at the Dayton HamVention. We played to a packed house, overflowed the room, and added 54 names to our mailing list. Our six subsequent forums have drawn increasingly larger audiences, and now BMHA is firmly established as a 'regular' at this world-renowned event.

This is the twenty-fourth issue of our quarterly newsletter, which has become the clearing house for the exchange of info and ideas for the hams who go on the air from their bicycles. Since the last issue of this newsletter we have added 27 new members. The total membership now stands at 455, with members in 43 states, and six countries. BMHA is affiliated with Adventure Cycling Association and the League of American Bicyclists.

BMHA membership puts you in touch with a friendly and helpful group of bike-riding hams. You'll make contacts through our membership directory, packet and E-mail address lists, bi-weekly net on 20 meters, annual meeting and Forum at the Dayton HamVention and other regional meetings, and of course through the BMHA NewsLetter, which has articles on bike trips, antennas, other gear, operating tips, etc. Membership application blank on the next to last page.

TRAVEL & ADVENTURE

Dave Does the Double Cross

Dave Porterfield, N3VHJ, has sent us his log for a trip he calls the Michigan Doublecross. He rode solo east-to-west across Michigan, then joined a group tour called PALM (Pedal Across Lower Michigan) for a west-to-east crossing. Associate Editor, Skip LaFetra AA6WK, and I have culled these excerpts from his log. —Ed.

MONDAY 19 JUNE 1995. From Monroe County KOA to Morenci.First entry in the journal was made at the 30-mile point, when the Camelback ran dry. I still had two water bottles but wanted to remove the Camelback because I didn't need an empty bladder on my back in 90+ F. temperatures. Besides that would give motorists a big circle on my white tee shirt, which is a better target than a black bag. That's a joke, because the motorists have been really considerate.At Morenci I stopped at the post office to mail a card and chat with the person at the counter. It's routine for me to intercept rural carriers and to stop in at post offices just to talk for a few moments and share my trip. Even though I don't know any of these people, they treat me like family. I guess that's because we are in the big postal family. (Back home Dave works for the post office, delivering mail every Saturday. His regular job is driving a school bus.)

TUESDAY 20 JUNE 1995. Morenci to Cottonwood Resort south of Quincy.As I was riding northward on US-127's shoulder I became "bicycle mobile" for the first time since the short test ride last week. I chatted with a ham who was near the Adrian repeater. He said that I was a bit choppy, but that could have been because of the terrain. I thought that it might be a loose connection on the antenna, but there was no problem hearing him, so I guess the connection was OK.

....Temperatures are still in the 90's. Supper at Coldwater Garden Restaurant was lemonade, water, lemonade, soup, salad, lemonade, chicken parmesan, spaghetti, lemonade, garlic bread, and lemonade.

....Today I got the cyclist's right leg trademark for the first time on this trip. I don't like to get the black sprocket marks because I've been cycling long enough that I should know how to avoid them. Truckers moved way over for me today even though there were shoulders on US-127, M-34, M-99, and US-12. I never felt threatened.

WEDNESDAY 21 JUNE 1995. Quincy to Green Valley Campground near Sturgis.That travel trailer next door has an obnoxious woman. The obnoxious one moved my swim suit from my table to another one while I was getting supper and put her buckets on my table. She keeps whining about one thing or another. A guy on the other side has a loud mouth and a guy in another direction can't stand his kid and wants to kill him — seriously. (He didn't touch the kid.) I got to sleep through the noise. I heard TV as late as 0300.

FRIDAY 23 JUNE 1995. Union to Bear Cave CCR Resort near Buchanan.The coax cable that runs from my 5/8 mag antenna is loose. Sometimes I get some sound by pushing the cable into the BNC connector. With the rubber duck antenna I hear nothing. It's unlikely that I'll make any contacts for field day tomorrow or Sunday.When I got to Niles I saw a woman sitting on a bench waiting for a bus. When I asked her if she knew where a Radio Shack is she pointed to the southwest corner of the intersection and said it was just across the street. Nobody in that Radio Shack knew anything about amateur radio. They didn't have an HTX-202 or instruction book.

SATURDAY 24 JUNE 1995: Buchanan to Bridgman.I didn't expect to find inconsiderate campers at a Coast-to-Coast Resort. At 0035 the noise of about 8 drinking buddies at a table and their music filtered

through to me. They were silent before 0200, but park regulations call for quiet at 2300.

....I'm up early, having my usual breakfast of Grape Nuts with fruit juice, because milk isn't available in brickpack.I went with a couple to get lunch. When I parked my bike against a school wall a cyclist who was with his grandson told me that was his wall and he rents space. I told him a little later that I was not going to pay the rent because I had stepped in chewing gum, which made it an unrentable spot. His grandson also stepped in the gum.

SUNDAY 25 JUNE 1995 Day 1 of PALM, Bridgman to Cassopolis.

....I awoke before 0600. Breakfast starts at 0630. Breakfast was sausage, eggs, pancakes, muffin, orange juice, and milk. Today was a nice change riding with a big group, rather than riding solo like I was last week.

MONDAY 26 JUNE 1995. Cassopolis to Colon.While I was eating lunch at the Dip and Dunk in Three Rivers, a thunderstorm reached town, and I decided to wait out the electrical part and see if the rain would slow down. I started riding in a slow rain and will have wet shoes for a while. I'm not going to put on my dry ones until I'm sure there will be no more rain. Hah! That day won't come.

....Colon calls itself the Magic Capital of USA. Blackstone the Magician is buried here. The town is named for the punctuation mark, not the body part.

TUESDAY 27 JUNE 1995. Colon to Jonesville.Rain didn't start until after my tent was pitched. There was no hot water in the shower room. That was the iciest shower I've had since high school! Rain is forecast for tomorrow and Thursday, with likelihood diminishing for Friday. I'm saving my dry shoes for the drive home to PA.

THURSDAY 29 JUNE 1995. Onsted to Dundee.This was a good day, it just drizzled off and on. We had more headwind than tailwind, but the 4 miles of tailwind boosted cruising speed from 15 to 18 miles per hour.Most of yesterday and today I rode with Allen Barber. He and his grandson had started on a tandem but the grandson got sick on Monday. Allen called his wife, who brought his road bike and took the grandson and tandem home. He's the guy who wanted rent for the wall space on Saturday.

FRIDAY 30 JUNE 1995. Dundee to Monroe.I decided to keep the HT turned on for the entire ride and attached it to my belt, with the speaker-mike clipped to the handlebar bag. I heard a ham talking about fishing. After he had signed off I called him and told him I was riding in PALM and would like a weather report. First thing he said was that he was surprised to hear from a "bicycle mobile" from Pennsylvania. He said the nearest rain was at Point Pelee and we should have a clear morning.We were joined this morning by a rider named Hal who does math while he rides. He told us when we had completed 11% of the day's ride.

RECAP.The only things that I took this year that I didn't use are things I would rather not use but would not be without: spare tires, spare tubes, patch kits, t

ools, and compass. Last year the compass would have helped me on the rainy day when I couldn't use the sun for direction, but this year when I was alone I had the sun all day. Despite an exceptionally hot first week and an exceptionally wet second week, I enjoyed the vacation. I didn't mind traveling alone for a week, but I preferred the group with all its families and lots of people to talk to.

—David Porterfield, N4VHJ
135 Textor School Road
Zelienople, PA 16063-3325

GETTING STARTED

Column conducted by Bil Paul, KD6JUI

Using HTs and Repeaters

In my last column I talked about buying an "HT," or handy-talkie (that is, a hand-held receiver/transmitter for very-high frequencies, or VHF; or ultra-high frequencies, or UHF) and about getting your ham (or amateur radio) license.

Assuming that you now have both, you need to study your HT's instruction book to learn how the darn thing works. Don't worry — it will most likely have many bells and whistles you'll never use.

There are two modes the HT is capable of using — duplex and simplex. Basically, when you're operating duplex you're using a repeater (transmitting on one frequency and listening on another frequency — the difference in frequencies being the "offset") and when you're operating simplex you operating HT-to-HT without a repeater, on the same frequency. Using repeaters you can talk over greater distances than when using simplex — and repeaters are where all the action is.

In some areas with many repeaters you must program a sub-audible "PL" tone into your HT in order to activate particular repeaters. Your repeater directory will tell you the frequency of the tone. Also, modern HTs allow you to program repeater attributes into your HT, allowing you to skip between repeaters with ease.

Repeaters

Now on to repeaters themselves. First off, realize that it's a privilege to use them — they're not a public utility like the phone company. They are there because of the hard work of hams like yourself or an amateur radio club. Most are available for considerate use by all hams.

Repeater directories are published by the American Radio Relay League and others which list most of the available repeaters. Or you can scan the ham bands using your HT to check for repeater activity. You should know that some repeaters are busy; some aren't; and some may be out of operation. Some are very friendly; some are more insular.

To see if your HT will activate a repeater, make sure you have the proper frequency and plus or minus offset (and PL tone, if needed) programmed into your HT. If no one is using the repeater, press the transmit button and say your callsign. Release the button — if the repeater rebroadcasts your transmission you will hear the tail end of the repeater signal — sometimes accompanied by a tone. If you don't hear anything, either the repeater isn't receiving your signal or it's turned off.

If no one appears on the repeater, and you need some information, help, or just wish to talk, then return and state your desire (anything but a free meal!), followed by your callsign. On the other hand, if the repeater is being used and you want to enter the conversation, wait for a break between the transmissions of the participating hams to announce yourself. If you are in a dire emergency, say MAYDAY. That will get you very quick attention!

Informal bits of repeater etiquette:

*** Keep transmissions short. Some repeaters automatically turn off after a few minutes of uninterrupted talk, to enforce that rule.

*** Wait several seconds after the previous transmission before you begin to transmit, allowing newcomers to break in.

*** Provide your name early on.

*** Always identify the person you're turning the conversation over to. If there are five stations participating, they all need to know who's getting the nod next. Try to remember the sequence, called the "rotation."

*** From time to time, repeat your callsign. It's wise to use the phonetic alphabet — alpha, bravo, charlie, etc. — to help other stations understand your callsign.

*** If your signal is weak and "in the noise," don't expect other stations using the repeater to bear with you forever. After you've taken care of your business, withdraw and just "listen out."

After all this technical rigmarole and etiquette stuff, don't be intimidated or daunted. Hams by and large (mostly male, by the way) are a friendly bunch, tend to welcome outsiders, and will be eager to help you.

Next issue I'll be talking about antennas and how to make a basic, homemade, 2-meter bike antenna.

—Bil Paul, KD6JUI

337 Estrella Way bilbee@aol.com
San Mateo CA 94403-2940

NEW HAMs

Two More Members Now Have Tickets!

They hit the books, sweated, and got nervous at the exam site---just as we all did. But they passed! Since the last issue these members have become licensed hams:

Lynn Dick, VE7MGK, Vancouver, BC, Canada
Charles Sather, KB2UNS, Bridgewater, New Jersey

Non-ham BMHAers, please send in your call sign as soon as you get your FCC amateur radio license. We'd like to list you in this column. If you have time, tell us how and what you studied, what helped you to pass the test. We'll pass it on to our non-ham members who are thinking about taking the exam.

Lynn writes:

....I now have my Basic License: VE7MGK. I've wanted to do this for years and when I read Hartley Alley's article in Adventure Cycling about cyclists using ham radio, I decided to give it a try. I bought a manual which has the questions at the end of the course pages.Studied hard, and I passed!

....I'd now like to: learn the Morse Code, cycle the Pacific Coast Bike Trail, and attend a HamVention. If anyone has any ideas or knows of any aids to help learn the code, I'd appreciate hearing from them.

—Mrs. Lynn Dick, VE7MGK
3244 West 38 Avenue
Vancouver, BC
Canada V6N 2X6

QSL CORNER

In this space we feature QSL cards and other printed items that have a bicycle-mobile motif. Send yours in. We'll run it.

Greetings From: NEW CARLISLE, OHIO



Hi _____

N8XKE
MARILYN CORBIN
6483 Brush Hollow Dr.
New Carlisle, OH
45344-9148 U.S.A.



Your Friend,
Marilyn

OPERATOR and net	DAY	DATE	TIME	STATION	MODE	CLASS	POWER

☐ CW ☐ PHONE

This is the very attractive QSL card of Marilyn Corbin, N8XKE, one of the new members who signed up at the BMHA Forum at Hamvention. Marilyn, an attorney, has been a ham for three years and an avid cyclist for 16 years. She has ridden on GOBA, the Great Ohio Bicycle Adventure, and her top mileage for one day is 135.

BMHA NET....ON 20

TIME: 2000 UTC and four hours later at 0000 UTC.

DATE: 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month.

FREQ: 14.253 -- plus or minus the QRM.

Look for me, NF0N, at those times, and if I'm unable to call the net please look for those who have picked up the net when I've been out of town. In particular, look for Assistant Net Controls Jim Kortge, NU8N, and John Liebenrood, K7RO. Jim covers the East, John covers the West, and I cover the middle.

---Mike Nickolaus, NF0N, BMHA Net Control

316 E. 32nd St.

S. Sioux City, NE 68776

Membership Application

MemAPPL3.wps 6/17/98 /pc /newmem /pac /E-mail /newHAM /NONmem /news /Q's /rost /walc /env

BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA

Box 4009, Boulder, CO 80306-4009

date _____

Individual \$10 _____ new member? _____ renewal? _____
(US or Canada)

Family \$15 _____ Foreign \$15 _____ Donation \$ _____
(limit: two persons)

Make check payable to BMHA, in US dollars or international money order.

Name _____ Call _____

Address _____ License Class _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Age _____ Most miles bicycled in one day _____

REMINDERS

Your Bicycle Flies For Free!

As a member of BMHA you get free transport of your bicycle, when you fly on Northwest Airlines. You save \$90 on a roundtrip flight. For details call Wild World of Travel, Missoula MT, 1-800-735-7109. Mention that you're a network member of Adventure Cycling.

Make Your Own "J" Antenna

As mentioned in the April '95 issue, Ken Wahrenbrock, KP6NC, has offered to provide detailed instructions for making his famous MOB Stainless "J" Antenna. This is the antenna used by over 40 members of the bicycling wing of the Downey (CA) ARC. Using this antenna on his bike, Ken can hit his base station when he's 100 miles from home—and using only 1.5 watts. These instructions require careful drilling and the ability to silver solder steel to brass. You must specify whether you want plans for 144, 220, or 440 MHz. They're \$1 each, postpaid. Write to Ken Wahrenbrock, KP6NC, 9609 Cheddar St, Downey CA 90242. (This offer available to BMHA members only.)

When you write a plug for BMHA (and please do!) in your local club's newsletter, be sure to include this information: "The annual dues is \$10. To receive a sample copy of the BMHA Newsletter and other info send an SASE to BMHA, Box 4009-RC, Boulder CO 80306." This will save our club a lot of trouble and expense.

Back Issues Still Available

You may purchase any of the twenty three back issues of the BMHA NewsLetter for \$1.50 each, postpaid. For info on the contents of the various issues send a business-size SASE to: BMHA, POB 4009, Boulder CO 80306-4009, and ask for the Index of Back Issues. This service available to members only.

BMHA's Official Logo

The next time you need to order new QSL cards, don't forget to include the BMHA logo in your design. Here's the official logo, as designed by Russ Dwarshuis, KB8U.

BICYCLE MOBILE



HAMS OF AMERICA

BICYCLE MOBILE



HAMS OF AMERICA

BMHA NEWSLETTER

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America
PO Box 4009
Boulder, CO 80306-4009

First Class Mail

COMMENTS

....Thank you for publishing the newsletter. The first two issues have been very helpful and now I "need" all the back issues. This summer I plan to ride around Lake Michigan with HF and 2-meter gear. I will not be purchasing the HF rig until after I read all the back issues of your newsletter.

---Dwight Jones, KO6FE, Loma Linda, CA

....Please enroll me as a member of BMHA. I read about your organization in the Aug. '95 QST. I ride to work 20 miles a day and use 2-meters to chat on the trip. I look forward to getting info on your group.

---Everett G Winsberg, N7BHI, Coupeville, WA

....Just saw the Aug. '94 issue of *Adventure Cycling*, (with the story about the cycling adventures of Jean and Hartley Alley.) I enclose SASE, please send info on BMHA, as offered.

I became a ham in April '95, mainly for sailing but possibly bicycling. Very frustrating figuring out ham gear etc. with no help. The test was easy, just memorization. I haven't figured out how to learn from other hams---not asking the right questions, I guess. Nobody here cares about sailing or bicycling so I'm looking to BMHA for help.

---Fred Smith, KE6SXP, Mt. Shasta, CA

....I am really enthusiastic about your group! I have been a ham for over a year and a bicyclist for about a year. Recently I have combined the two with a J-pole antenna. Mostly, my riding is commuting, but I plan to do the Seattle-to-Portland Bicycle

Classic this year. I have enclosed a check for membership and all of the back issues.

---Marcie M Stilwell, KC7DAT, Poulsbo, WA

....In the last issue I read that the couple from Alaska, Carol (WL7CRE) and Dave Devoe (WL7CRD), are hoping to make radio and eyeball contact with BMHA members, while on their Trans-America northern-route bike trip. That would put them near my home, 20 miles south of Canada, just off Interstate 15. I remember thinking to myself, "That sounds interesting, I better drop them a note on e-mail."

A few minutes later, in came their reply. Now that's fast response time. They mentioned they'd be in the area and were looking for company on the ride. Now, in this area, excitement of any sort is fairly rare so I wrote back with a little info and invited them to drop in on their way through.

Which leads me to an interesting idea. As I said, I enjoy having guests stop by from time to time. It's a little ways off the main road (16 miles) and conditions are a bit primitive but it still beats the heck out of camping in the ditch. Even if I'm gone or buried in some project, I can still pass along advice on local camping spots, attractions and repeater frequencies.

On the other hand, with a little luck I hope to spend a few weeks/months on the road this summer. It would be great to have a few contacts in other areas to meet and visit with folks, or even a place to stay or a backyard to camp in.

So---what would you folks think about setting up a bicycle-hams hospitality list? Good Idea? Crazy idea?

---Bill Vodall, WA7NWP, Box 75, Kevin MT 59454

Reply to: vodall@bigsky.dillon.mt.us